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ABSTRACT

A reading problem does exist within the schools; moreover, reading retardation is of epidemic proportions in the inner-city schools. Educators continue to seek new materials and different approaches to reading instruction for students who read below their grade and expectancy levels and who need a remedial program. Reading, like speaking and listening, must be considered a language process. The reader must operate in response to real, meaningful, grammatical language if he is to have all the information available to him in proper interrelationship, and he must be able eventually to reconstruct and comprehend a passage. Those instructional materials and strategies in which learning is viewed as an accumulation of bits and pieces are unjustified and ineffective. For materials to be effective they have to be based on a thorough knowledge of reading as a language process. Remedial reading materials should, then, incorporate aspects of the native language developed naturally in a reading program. (HMD)

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NEED FOR A REMEDIAL READING PROGRAM FOR FOURTH GRADE CHILDREN USING SUPPLEMENTARY SYNTACTICALLY-ORIENTED READING MATERIALS

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PREFACE

For the past four years, with financial support from the U. S. Office of Education, Temple University has been conducting a doctoral level program to prepare leadership personnel in the areas of mathematics and English education. The Trainers of Teacher Trainers program or "Triple T", as it has been called, has focused solely upon education in the urban environment.

The primary objective of the program was to provide teacher trainers and curriculum and instruction specialists with the insights and compecencies necessary to provide leadership in inner-city education. This objective was achieved by a three-phase program: academic and professional experiences within the university; internships within the university and inner-city schools; realistic community experiences within the various urban communities of Philadelphia.

During its operational period, thirty-one doctoral students (clinicians) from elementary and secondary schools, colleges, universities, and social organizations were full-time participants. The majority of these were from minority groups. In addition to the student participants there were more than fifty college and school personnel and no less than one hundred community people who had an active involvement. The project indeed brought together, with singular purpose, representatives from the community, public schools, and various colleges of the University.

From the outset an integral part of the program was the creation of innovative curricular and instructional materials and projects, also

a considerable number of papers were written and extensive research was conducted by the participants, an associated research professor, and the project director. The research efforts dealt with virtually every aspect of the project and at this point in time is nearing completion. The materials that follow in this publication, and others in the series, are a means of disseminating the results of TTT's efforts with the hope that others interested in similar problems can profit by the program's experiences. It is also hoped that several of TTT's innovative approaches would be of practical use to schools and teacher training institutions in the common quest to improve education and the training of teachers. *

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May, 1974

* The project gratefully acknowledges Ms. Roberta R. Johnson for the careful typing and preparation of the manuscript.

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Need for a Remedial Reading Program for Fourth Grade Children Using Supplementary Syntactically-Oriented Reading Material

Insistent concerns in urban schools that recur repeatedly are: (1) a reading problem does exist within the schools, and (2) reading retardation is of epidemic proportion in the inner-city schools. Educators continue to seek new materials and different approaches to reading instruction for students reading below their grade and expectancy level and who need a remedial program.

Need for a Rededial Reading Program

Perhaps the most pressing problem in elementary education today is the exceedingly high percentage of children with severe reading difficulties (Eisenberg, 1966). Estimates of incidence vary widely, but several authorities have suggested that between 10 and 15 percent of the elementary school population is at least two years behind grade level (Strickland, 1962).

W. P. Percival has studied the fact that most failures in the early grades (K-3) result from poor reading ability. Blair also has remarked about the large number of elementary students not reading on grade level. The negative effect this reading retardation has on the entire school program has become obvious. Teachers are anxious and concerned to help children who are having reading difficulties. It may be clear that many pupils need remedial instruction, but providing proper instruction is never easy and can often be frustrating. Certainly the presence of many

elementary pupils and especially the considerable numbers of fourth grade pupils who read below their level issustrate sharply the need for additional instruction. Even in first grade, students not reading at the end of the first year should be placed in a remedial reading situation. Their placement in a remedial reading program could be justified. Children then would not become deeply imprisoned in faulty learning habits, nor would they be convinced of their own ineptness.

In relating remedial strategies to basic reading considerations, certain concerns need to be delineated. Recent work in the area of psycholinguistics has focused attention on the need to assess the reader's understanding of the grammatical structure of a reading passage as well as the semantic meaning of the passage. Allen (1964) has suggested that reading comprehension is dependent upon the reader's implicit analysis of the syntactic structure of a sentence. Children who have trouble learning to read are those who are unable to take the abstract bits and pieces of their instruction and put them together. Unfortunately in most remedial reading programs these disabled readers continue to get extra instruction in skills as a form of remediation.

It would appear that there is a need for a different approach to reading instruction. A conventional assumption of reading instruction is that an unspecified minimum competency in producing and understanding the spoken language is basic to learning to read. Early investigators (Strickland, 1962; Loban, 1963; Ruddell, 1966) have indicated that certain syntactic and vocabulary factors in oral language tend to be related to beginning reading achievement, and to point up the need for fresh attacks

on the problem.

Characteristics of Pupils Failing in Reading

Before initiating reading instruction in the remedial reading program, the teacher should know the reading attainments of each pupil in the class. This information can be obtained from the school records; but more specific information can be obtained from standardized reading tests* and informal reading inventories. Among the retarded readers in the class are those children with perceptual problems; those who are disruptive and those who have been inappropriately taught.

Though the etiology of reading retardation is varied, the factor common to all who suffer from this disability is a miserable history of repeated failure, accompanied by feelings of inadequacy, lack of self esteem, and by withdrawal from the learning situation. In remedial work with retarded readers, attention to all phases of language development may be as essential as specific reading drills. It is doubtful whether a child can become a fluent reader, comprehending fully what he reads, without a good oral language foundation and continued attention to oral language improvement. Children understand and speak the language before they come to school, therefore, it would seem appropriate to use their language to understand the process of reading.

Despite the tremendous amount of research into the causes and treatment of reading failure, teachers are still unsure as to the best approach to the problem of helping the retarded reader. Because of the preponderance

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* At the elementary level the Metropolitan Reading Achievement, Durrell Sullivan, etc. Tests may be used.

of retarded readers, remedial reading instruction must begin in the elementary grades.

Reading and Oral Language

Even though an impressive body of scientific knowledge of American English grammatical structures and devices has been developed by linguistic scholars, not many linguists have concentrated on reading as a language-related process. If reading instruction can be concentrated upon as a language-related process, the English language could be viewed as a communication system organizing words into sentences and sentences into larger constructs.

The thrust of approaching reading as a language-related process is a departure from the present trend of approaching reading from a hierarchy of distinct reading skills and abilities. The process of learning to read in one's native language is the process of transfer from the auditory signs for language signals, which the child has already learned, to the new visual signs for the same signals...learning to read...means developing a considerable range of habitual responses to a specific set of patterns of graphic shape (Fries, 1963).

As early as 1908 Huey developed a unitary view of reading sentences and made astute observations about inner speech and intonation in silent reading. From his experiments he concluded that language begins with the sentence and that this is the unit of language everywhere (Huey, 1908, 1968). Huey also understood that reading does not consist of perceptions of letters nor of series of words. He found that words of sentences are read at a distance from the fixation point at which letters are no longer recognizable presented single (p. 62).

Moreover, even every familiar short sentences were sometimes recognized as wholes under conditions which prevented recognition of their constituent words (1908, 1968). Words exist only with the flow of language. Neither words nor morphemes can be defined, pronounced, or classified outside of this language stream of varying intonation, pitch, stress and juncture (Athey, 1971).

Goodman (1972) has expanded Huey's thinking in his experiments. He states a child's progress in learning to read is not a mastery of parts leading to mastery of the whole, but rather a matter of successive approximation of prficient reading. Ryan and Semmel (1969) conclude that using their knowledge of the language and context, the reader does not need to identify every printed unit (letter or word) in order to interpret the message. The methods of precise identification assume that all the necessary cues are in the unit to be recognized.

Children's speech moves rapidly from unintelligible babbling to effective speech. They increase their control over the whole process mastering details only after the whole has moved forward. In reading, much the same is possible provided the learners are exposed to whole natural meaningful language. Reading involves the use of effective sampling strategies which are based on the reader's knowledge of the language and of the reading situation.

In rapid tachistoscopic presentation of letters, Kolers (1969) found that children could identify words better than individual letters. Furthermore, sentences were always perceived word by word.

Even though children have a natural facility for creating and learning language, some children experience difficulty in learning because of inadequate cognitive stimulation during the early years. These children have experienced less opportunity to listen to the kind of complex speech that will enhance their own vocabulary development. Their conceptual repertoire is limited and they usually develop a language which is different from the language that they are exposed to in the school. Nevertheless, reading is a language process and a means of communication. Therefore, it would appear that reading instruction should be viewed as a language process to be mastered rather than a set of skills to be learned. If children are competent users of oral language, then reading instruction should recognize the language structure.

Then as Goodman says, perhaps we have failed to recognize that the solution to this complex reading problem is found within the child. If we view children as users of language, our goal becomes one of making literacy an extension of the learner's natural language.

Children may not be able to decode words in isolation but they may be able to read the smae words successfully in a running context. Syntactic context is essential in both language learning and reading. Recognition of individual words only contributes to comprehension of meaning. Total comprehension involves reactions to several signal cues, such as: order of words (syntax pattern), intonation, inflections, and certain key functions that words play (pattern markers) (Athey, 1971).

A child already knows these systems which operate in the perceptual process of knowing language, by the time he begins to read. His knowledge of the structural system of the sound and grammar he uses in speech sets up certain expectations that strongly influence his perception. When instructors recognize this basic knowledge, they will see that it forms the linguistic basis of perception in reading.

Ruddell (1971) states that a child's ability to comprehend oral or written language seems to be a function of his ability to see relationships among elements in a sentence. He cites Strickland's (1962) evidence that children who use movables and subordination in oral language are better at reading these features. Ruddell's (1965) own study of fourth-grader's oral language patterns to written patterns in their reading texts reveals that the children's reading comprehension scores were significantly higher for passages reflecting their oral patterns of speech than for those passages that differed from their oral patterns.

Language cannot be broken into pieces without changing it to a set of abstractions: sounds, letters, words. When it is all together, the learner can use his knowledge of the language structure and his conceptual background as a framework in which to utilize graphic input.

In his new look at the reading process, Lefevre (1964) has suggested that word-calling, developed on the basis of either letter-sound correspondence or word-meaning emphasis, should be replaced by reading larger linguistic structures. The word should become a minor linguistic unit while the importance of intonation and stress patterns and of clauses

and sentences should be emphasized. The sentence should be read not as a sequence of words, but as a unitary meaning-bearing sequence of structural functions. Tatham (1969) also emphasizes that from the very beginning of reading instruction a child must learn to read sentences; beginning with isolated words results in the unnatural practice of giving a full stress to each word - the opposite of what is done in speaking. As reported by Strang and Hocker (1965), authors could help prevent failure and disillusionment on the part of childfen who come to school with a desire to learn to read interesting stories for themselves by writing beginning reading materials in the children's familiar oral vocabulary and sentence structure.

Tatam's study and other literature dealing with oral language and reading appears to suggest that there is unanimous though limited evidence that children comprehend material written with frequent oral language patterns significantly better than material written with infrequent oral language patte ns (4th graders were subjects for the studies). From their analysis of children's oral language, some researchers have indicated that certain patterns are the building blocks of children's oral language; they are used frequently regardless of age or intelligence.

Need for Supplementary Syntactically-Oriented Reading Materials

Why is there a new awareness for syntactically-oriented reading materials? The following facts may suggest several reasons. Some materials have been developed for beginning readers using isolated words to teach the alphabetic principles. This procedure is impractical pragmatism because intonation contours are violated. That is, in ordinary speech each word

is not given equal stress. But if each word is equally stressed, word-by-word reading is likely to result. Ruth Strickland has noted that linguists and educationists have demonstrated that by the time a relatively normal child comes to school he has excellent subconscious command of the syntax of the language as he hears it spoken, not to mention an immense vocabulary. This finding may encourage the use of syntactically-oriented reading materials.

Despite the tremendous amount of research into the causes and treatment of reading failure, teachers are still unsure as to the best approach to the problem of helping the retarded reader. Because of the preponderance of retarded readers, remedial reading instruction must begin in the elementary grades. As an aid, Reading By Patterns* was used as supplementary syntactically-oriented reading material for fourth grade children.

Reading By Patterns used as supplementary syntactically-oriented reading material is based on a psycholinguistic approach to reading instruction and emphasized the need for pupils to be taught how to develop sentence sense. It gives pupils a chance to observe and practice the interrelationships among thinking, speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Lefevre, 1972). Structural meaning, one area of comprehension has been presented in this material. The purpose of this approach is to teach the students one sentence pattern which is found in written material. There is evidence that the ability to recognize the underlying structure of sentences is related to reading comprehension. Structure provides clues which the reader

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*Reading By Patterns was written by Carl A. Lefevre, Helen Lefevre and Dave Shore.

needs in order to understand the written language. Reading By Pattern is presented so students can understand the significance of the word and important function words. Reading By Patterns emphasizes developing sentence sense in reading by mastering basic meaning-bearing language patterns.

Reading By Patterns is a linear program which represents a single strand of a comprehensive reading program. The basic learning premise of the material is immediate reinforcement of a correct response to a stimulus situation. The principal aim of the instruction is to help the student transform his normal fluency in speaking oral English into a parallel ability to read simple printed English sentences and paragraphs (Lefevre, 1974). A unique aspect of the Reading By Patterns material is that the student does not have to be an independent reader. He listens to the tutor read or he listens to the cassette, and he visually follows the printed material. After the directions and reading tasks have been read aloud to him, the student responds in writing to each frame and checks his response before moving on to the next frame. This approach also helps students decode and recode sentences in terms of main sentence parts. The thrust of the entire program is to develop comprehension of messages conveyed through printed English sentences (Lefevre, 1972).

Study Using Supplementary Reading By Patterns*

Based on the hypothesis that most children from the ages of five to seven already speak the language quite successfully and by so doing have

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*This project was supported by funds received from District #5, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This study formed the base of Dr. Grant's Doctoral Dissertation completed at Temple University, Philadelphia, Pa., 1973.

effectively demonstrated their mastery of the basic structure of American English, the main task of Reading By Patterns is to build constructively upon the language that children generally have mastered.

Also based upon the hypothesis that Reading By Patterns begins with the sequential development of language structure which allows the child to experience linguistic signals consciously, this reading material was used with fourth grade children living in a low socioeconomic environment, and attending an inner-city school in Philadelphia. The reading material was used as supplementary material in the school that used a basal reading program. The program was treated as remedial reading instruction and was presented either by tutors or on cassette tapes.

In one group parents were used as tutors to work with individual children using the Reading By Patterns material. The tutors, residents of the school community were recruited by correspondence and by personal home visits by the author. All the tutors were black except two who were Puerto Rican. Twenty adults were selected to serve as tutors in this project.

Even though the adults were enthusiastic about serving as tutors, they were apprehensive about their ability to instruct in reading. Therefore, special emphasis was placed on training the inexperienced adults before and during the program to serve effectively as tutors. The objectives of the tutor training program were as follows:

1. To orient tutors to the purposes of the program and the responsibilities of the tutor

2. To help beginning tutors overcome their initial anxiety about serving as tutors.

3. To help tutors establish good working relationships with their pupils

4. To provide tutors with the information they needed for effective service.

Before being introduced to their pupils, the tutors were given twelve hours of training in tutorial skills and use of the special syntactically-oriented reading material. All the tutors met with the investigator for information about and demonstration of Reading By Patterns the special reading material.

The pre-service training experiences focused on the objectives of the tutorial program, the organization of the program, duties of the tutor, and characteristics of the pupils (reading levels at which they probably would be operating).

Interspersed with the tutorial meetings were five in-service training sessions. These sessions not only provided the tutors with techniques that would aid them in instructing their students but they also helped the tutors to answer specific questions about a concern or problem involving the tutee.

Before the tutor administered the program, she became completely familiar with the material ahead of time. The tutors, working in pairs, practiced reading orally with a tape recorder and then they listened to the recording. Positive suggestions about the tutor's oral reading were made by the participating tutor and the investigator. Since the reading

material was read aloud to the subject, the tutor's oral contribution to this program was of the utmost importance.

The Reading By Patterns material was put on the cassette tapes which served as a tutor for individual students or small groups of students.

The t test for correlated means was computed to determine if there was any growth in reading achievement or change in attitude. The t test of correlated means was used to determine the significance of the difference between mean scores on the pre-tests and the mean scores on the post-tests. The findings of the t test for correlated means indicated that the boys and girls using Reading By Patterns showed positive growth in reading at the $p < .05$ level of significance. The findings of the t test for correlated means indicated that there was no change in attitude of the boys and girls using the Reading By Patterns material.

A univariate two-way analysis of variance (treatment x sex) was performed to determine the significant differences between the groups on the attitude scale and the subtest of the reading achievement test. The results of the 3 x 2 analysis of variance indicated there were significant treatment and interaction effects among the students. There was a highly significant difference among the treatment groups (Main Effect) at the $p < .01$ level of significance; there was also a high significant difference generated by the interaction between treatment (A) and sex (B) at the $p < .01$ level of significance.*

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*Data is available, upon requiest, from the author at Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19122.

In Reading By Patterns only one basic pattern is used (N V N) Noun part, Verb part, and Noun completer, which may indicate a reason for the positive reading growth made by the students using this material. The N V N pattern is the basic English pattern and the most commonly used; many other English sentence patterns also have three parts and this parallelism with other patterns is reinforcing and transferable (Lefevre, 1972). These findings may also be interpreted in relation to a previous study conducted by Ruddell (1963). He showed that fourth graders read more easily passages constructed using the sentence patterns produced with high frequency. The sentence patterns used in Reading By Patterns are simple and contain high redundance which enhances predictability of the words. Nurss (1969) concludes that less complex structures are easier to understand in oral and silent reading modes.

Conclusion and Discussion

It would appear that the reader in a remedial reading program should not receive more of the same. The reader must operate in response to real, meaningful grammatical language if he is to have all the information available to him in proper interrelationship, and he must be able to eventually reconstruct and comprehend a passage. Reading, like speaking and listening, can be considered as a language process. Therefore, it is essential for educators to view reading as a receptive language process and readers as users of language (Goodman, 1972). In reading instruction the child needs all the reading strategies he can get to help him. His progress is not a mastery of parts leading to mastery of

parts leading to mastery of the whole, but rather a matter of successive approximation of proficient reading (Goodman, 1972). To accomplish the task the reader must be exposed to whole, natural meaningful language.

It is not only a matter of sequentially pairing visual forms with auditory forms which are then interpreted like speech, but rather, it is a constructive, active process in which the reader uses his cognitive and linguistic knowledge to reproduce a probable utterance from a careful sampling of cues and then matches that prediction for appropriateness (Ryan and Semmel, 1969). Language cannot be broken into pieces without changing it to a set of abstractions: sounds, letters, words. When it is all together, the learner can use his knowledge of the language structure and his conceptual background as a framework in which to utilize graphic input (Goodman, 1972). Remedial readers need a chance at making their language increasingly more natural and more interesting and an attempt should be made to help them alleviate their problem.

In order for learners to be successful in reading, careful examination of reading materials should take place by those educators who plan to use them. Many materials for reading instruction have been constructed largely around learning theories that view learning as an accumulation of bits and pieces. Programs are then developed that break learning down into sequences of small easily managed tasks. These tasks may be related to a measurable isolatable behavior. Though these reading materials have been used generally, there seems to be no real justification for them, especially when we view the results of children's reading. For materials to be successful they would have to be based on the thorough knowledge of

reading as a language-related process. The interesting varied materials should be keyed to the backgrounds of the learners.

Teaching and learning in reading should be centered in comprehension. The importance of any particular letters and words in a sequence can be determined only in relationship to the message the whole sequence is conveying. Therefore, learners must deal with meaningful natural language and strive to get meaning by processing written language. They should develop comprehension strategies for selecting and using the graphic information, predicting an underlying grammatical structure and relating experiences and concepts to written language. Huey states that no single word names or describes the whole. When a single word is presented, therefore, it suggests but a part or an aspect of this total meaning and is felt as inadequate and artificial unless given in its sentence context (p. 167). We may conclude then that remedial reading materials should incorporate aspects of the native language developed naturally in a reading program.

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